Poetry is a prose art of the mind in which words communicate meaning, inspire emotion, trigger memories, and express emotion. Writers of poetry get the muse to write their poems from different sources and also write poems for specific reasons but mostly for didactic purposes. There are several components of poetry that authors use in writing poems or getting to the peak of their works and none of them can joke with these elements. The main reason is that they use these elements as an avenue to pass their message to readers and capture their minds so that their poems will be feasible for acceptance. However, despite these similarities among authors, there is always one thing that distinguishes a poem from another and this separation revolves around their style. This study uses two poems, “Sonnet V by Robert Southey and “Worth” by Marylyn Nelson to explore and showcase the individuality of authors in their works. In other words, the study gives a clear illustration of how authors use elements in poetry differently to achieve their message.

The poem “Sonnet V” by Robert Southey talks about the consequences of slavery in the future. The poem has a variety of themes such as the friends' farewell to each other, the possible repercussions of slavery in the future, and the imagined moral views of those in power. There is a high emphasis on “revenge” as the personae keep explaining the “wrath” of slaves as one that will surpass the torture they receive from their lords (slave masters). To explore the concept of the future, the author tries to create a person who will narrate how slavery will turn into brutality for slave masters in the future. While having these preconceived notions about slavery in the future, the speaker briefly explains what slaves go through and how at that moment, they have lost their freedom to engage in activities that will make them smile. In other words, the speaker is trying to discuss the plight of slaves in slavery and the horrors they will have to encounter in the future. However, in this poem, there is a theme of vengeance, enslavement, death, and brutality.

The poem “Worth” by Marilyn Nelson on the other hand discusses the worth slaves have as people who do not have power. Starting from the title of the poem itself, "Worth" which means value and reflects the importance of "esteem," It can be deduced that, Nelson wants readers to understand the truth about slavery and what it looks like to be a slave. What makes everything about the poem real is the identity of the personae who happens to be a female slave and this to Nelson serves as an opportunity for the audience to believe and accept his words. The personae explains the light and darkness of being a slave, a vision of pessimism and optimism. She explains that a slave is being sold in the market like an inanimate object and no matter how the physique of the slave, she will be sold like nobody. Therefore, slaves have no worth and have been transformed from humans to objects being sold in the market. The personae adds to this reality and continues to describe the way the owners sold her. At the same time, she declares that she does not look at the value of her body in the market and the body’s worth is “decided by the owners themselves.” This is a woman who has lost all her worth as a person and has a humiliating look through her voice throughout the poem. This is to show that the slaves are hopeless and have no power to object the fate. On the contrary, she was happy in her condition in the sense that she had learned to attach herself to the history of the blacks, someone like her grandfather who happens to be a warrior. However, the victory from the side of her great grandfather makes her realize that slaves are not worthless. In this poem, there are themes of slavery, conquer, buying and selling, and value.

Both the poems try to open the eyes of the audience about the reality of slaves in slavery. The poem “Sonnet V” presents the inequality in relationships between the slave owner and the slaves. The slave in the ocean of "revenge" and the master in the ocean of brutality. Similarly, “Worth” shows the awareness of the people about slavery and the worth of slaves for being sold like commodities. Despite that the two authors' thematic-preoccupations revolve around "slavery," they did not present slavery in the same manner and they also did not see the same style, precisely literary devices to discuss slavery. Despite that the two authors' thematic-preoccupations revolve around "slavery," they did not present slavery in the same manner and they also did not see the same style, precisely literary devices to discuss slavery. In his poem, Southey used foreshadowing to explain the in-depth brutality of slavery. The personae says:

"Did then the bold slave rear, at last, the sword/ or vengeance? drench'd he deep his thirsty blade/ in the cold bosom of his tyrant Lord?" (Ref-AB1CD2).

This is to show that although the slaves are currently suffering at the hands of their lords but in the future, when they have the opportunity to be free, they will revenge and rise over their "tyrant lord" (Ref-A1B2C3) by their sword and judgment. To give a vivid picture of this, Nelson relies deeply on metaphor as a way to bring the judgment of the slaves in the future to life. He uses the metaphor “cold bosom” to explain how the slaves will use their swords for the unfriendly lords they had. Another metaphor is thirsty blade and it reveals how the slaves will be so eager to take revenge. However, with a series of rhetorical questions like “oh! Who shall blame him” (Ref-D4E5F6), enjambment and 14 lines rhymed structure, Southey was able to investigate the future action of the slaves. Enjambment is a run-on line and obviously, Southey used it to explain the persistence of the wrath of slaves after their freedom and also the continuation of the slave masters' brutality upon the slaves. Also, the 14 lines sonnet structure of ababcdcdefefgg keeps the interest of the reader in reading the poem. The speaker uses an assertive tone to let the reader understands that she is sure about what he says about the slave “vengeance” in the future. Also, there is a tone of pity as the speaker shows she pity the slave for being in that position that put them in a situation where they cannot smile like before. This tone shows the slave is hopeless.

Nelson's on the other hand did not begin her poem with a very tender straightforward but saddened group of words. The diction at the beginning of the poem is at the level of every reader in the sense that all readers will understand clearly the point.

Today, in America, people were bought and sold;/ for hundred for a “likely Negro wench” (Ref-JHG789).

The beginning of the poem shows how the personae are so hurt about her situation and other slaves. As a result, Nelson did not put much attention to difficult words. He was so particular about the message and want the reader to understand the persona clearly. The main element used in the poem to explain the degraded value of slaves is rhyme. For instance, she uses the words “Sold” (line 1) and “Gold” (line 3) to explain how humans (slaves) are being exchanged for money. She also uses “Lion” and “iron” to explain the positive part of the blacks and this serves as a hopeful tone for the personae. Instead of using run-on lines, Nelson made use of punctuation to insert a break in what she said. This can be said to be an avenue for readers to understand clearly her pain. Thus, Nelson concentrated so much on colon, comma, full stop, dash, a hyphen, and question mark in his work. The use of personal pronouns like me, I, and my” and the use of Negro wench also hints the readers that the personae is a female slave who is involved in the bitterness of slavery. The tone of this poem is evaluative in the sense that the personae is so interested in teaching the audience about the reality of slaves.

In a short story by Alice Walker titled “everyday use” Walker discussed slavery from another perspective that is far different from Southey's “Sonnet V” and slightly different from Nelson's worth. Instead of emphasizing the wrath of the slaves in the future, Walker, using a symbol of Africa, “quilt” emphasized the uniqueness of the African tradition and how it can be brought to life amid people (whites) who do not appreciate it. This notion was enlightened through the face of the character, Dee who happens to be so particular about finding the “whole” of African identity. This is slightly similar to the poem “Worth” in the sense that Nelson at a point emphasized using the great grandfather of the personae how powerful and bold Africans. On the other hand, Walker utilized Dee to reveal that Africa has more to it than what its counterpart regards her. However, in searching for this true identity, Dee changed her name to Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo and by the time she went to visit her mother and Maggie, she made them realize that she has started wearing the traditional garbs that look good on her than any other. Also, she advised her mother and Maggie about the quilt that they should not just use it to decorate the wall or regard it as an everyday item. Else, the beauty of the cultural impact of the “quilt” will be ruined and lost.

This study explains how elements of poetry are used by authors to achieve their didactic aim. The study using the poems “Sonnet V” by Robert Southey and “Worth” by Marilyn Nelson and the short story, “everyday use” by Alice Walker towards the end explains that no matter how familiar authors are towards literary elements, they cannot use them the same way in their works and many of them use specific literary items to prove their uniqueness and the individuality of their works.